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SUBJECT: EL SALVADOR HOSTS THIRD ANNUAL ANTI-GANG CONFERENCE

Classified By: Ambassador Charles L. Glazer for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. The Government of El Salvador hosted the Third Annual Anti-Gang Conference at the Decameron Resort in Sonsonate, El Salvador from April 23-27. Nearly 200 people were in attendance including law enforcement and government representatives from the U.S., El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico. Canada, Belize, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Panama also participated with a minor role. While many new initiatives were discussed, nothing concrete was agreed upon. Nevertheless the conference served as an excellent forum for networking and idea sharing for the attendees. There was widespread agreement that a real-time gang intelligence database with access for all pertinent law enforcement officials from the affected countries would be useful. The Salvadorans also laid out an ambitious plan to place police attaches in a number of their consulates and embassies, though it is uncertain if they will follow through. Ambassador Glazer and President Saca addressed the conference, with the Ambassador calling on the GOES to sign a bilateral extradition with the USG as soon as possible. The GOES responded by saying that criminal deportations from the U.S. are the primary threat to El Salvador's internal security. END SUMMARY.

Attendees

¶2. (U) The U.S. was represented by officials from the federal, state, and local level including: ATF, DHS, DOJ, the FBI (field offices from across the U.S.), DEA, the U.S. Marshals Service, the Department of State (from Washington and regional embassies), and by state and local law enforcement representatives from areas most affected by gang violence such as Southern California and Northern Virginia.

The Conference

¶3. (U) The Conference agenda included a follow up and status report on the recommendations that came out of the Los Angeles Chief of Police Summit. Presentations were given about the history of MS-13 and 18th Street gangs, and the role of the Mexican Mafia, la "EME", on Hispanic gangs. Every participating nation gave a report on the gang situation in their country including: Canada, the U.S., Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panama. The Salvadoran Ministry of Public Security and National Security Commission (CNSP) each

presented a piece on prevention strategies. The PNC gave three presentations and US federal agencies including, ATF, DHS, FBI NGIC and NGTF each gave presentations.

¶4. (U) In his closing remarks, Salvadoran National Police (PNC) Director Avila summarized the following proposals that came out of the conference:

--Identify a first point of contact in each participating country that would allow the timely dissemination of information to the corresponding country. As a first step the PNC in El Salvador will create a Transnational Anti-Gang Center (TAG) that will serve as the first point of contact for El Salvador. (NOTE: The goal here is to create of a network of centers, one in each country, as an initial point of contact wherein participating countries would go to request, provide or share gang related intelligence and information. In the case of the U.S., the primary point could be the National Gang Intelligence Center or a similar entity.

Once contacted, they would have to refer the request for information sharing to the appropriate state, local, or federal agency. It is anticipated other countries will replicate the TAG or designate other units within their agencies. PNC Director Avila mentioned that LAPD would be participating in the TAG. End Note).

--Take advantage of INTERPOL's 1-24-7 as a tool for the exchange of information between the countries attending the Conference. The GOES plans on installing the 1-24-7 in the TAG.

--Work to establish police attache offices in Canada, the U.S., Mexico, and Central America, with the objective of facilitating the exchange of information. (NOTE: El Salvador said they would have reps in each country, and in the U.S. they would seek to have attaches in their consulates in New York, Washington, and Los Angeles.

--Form a Latin American Association of Transnational Gang Investigators. Contact will be made with U.S. Associations to define protocols and a proposal presented at the next Central American Association of Chiefs of Police meeting. The Association is currently chaired by Costa Rica with El Salvador serving as co-chair. This would be the first Latin American Gang Investigator Association.

--Hold a working group meeting in the near future to establish a timetable to track long and short range goals for each of the above mentioned proposals and to track the four recommendations from the LA Chiefs of Police Summit (Intelligence, Most Wanted, Prevention, and Officer Exchange). It was proposed that this meeting will take place before August. The site has yet to be determined.

¶5. (U) In his closing remarks, Minister of Public Security Figueroa mentioned the Campeche "technical table" meeting held two weeks ago. During this meeting, representatives from Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador discussed Regional Security. One of the topics was gangs. Figueroa noted El Salvador took advantage of the meeting by presenting the TAG concept and the use of the I- 24 - 7 system. Figueroa also noted that countries without wiretapping laws were asked to push for legislation for such laws (Comment: El Salvador does not have such a law and is unlikely to any time soon because it requires a constitutional amendment, though the Ambassador did challenge the Assembly to approve such a measure in his speech. End comment). Additionally, the other countries were asked to subscribe to an agreement for the creation of police attache offices. Figueroa also applauded the FBI's initiative to have a legal framework to regulate extraditions, but opined that deportations of persons with criminal histories from the U.S. are the primary threat to El Salvador's internal security. Both PNC Director Avila and Minister Figueroa said they want El Salvador to be the host of the Fourth Annual Conference next year.

Comment

16. (C) This event was important as regional efforts to combat gang violence are starting to coalesce into a coherent strategy. The Transnational Anti-Gang (TAG) Initiative announced by Attorney General Gonzales in his February visit to San Salvador received near unanimous praise by the representatives of the countries in attendance. It will be very important for the USG to fully fund this and other initiatives that are agreed upon as part of our regional security strategy. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that the GOES and other regional governments are going to follow through on some of the ambitious proposals they raised at the conference, like the costly proposal to station police attaches at a series of embassies and consulates regionally. They will continue to look to the USG for financing and support.

17. (C) At the bilateral level, an extradition treaty between the GOES and USG would be an especially useful tool to combat gang violence, bringing some of the most wanted individuals including murderers whose whereabouts are well known in El Salvador to justice. Members of the Saca Administration have reiterated privately that they support executing an extradition treaty, but that they do not believe the political will exists to pass such a measure where a super-majority of 56 votes would be needed in the Legislative Assembly to modify the Constitution to allow for life imprisonment. That would include getting FMLN votes, which the Administration suggests is very unlikely because they believe the FMLN is afraid the USG would seek extradition of some of their members under claims they have ties with FARC, ELN, Chavez, or under some other scheme. Closer to the truth is that the FMLN is unlikely to support ARENA on anything at this point, especially on an issue they feel infringes on Salvadoran sovereignty.

18. (C) GOES officials have offered some alternatives to extradition, such as prosecuting these individuals in El Salvador for crimes committed in the United States, but privately concede that they would need U.S. financial support to realize these prosecutions. We will continue to press the Saca Administration and the political class to come to the understanding that an extradition treaty would be in their interests as well as ours. While it is noteworthy that, the Saca Administration supports the idea of extradition, the continued propensity of the GOES to blame all of their security problems on deportations from the U.S. is a serious distraction from achieving concrete results.

Glazer